

Mr. LAUTENBERG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I thank you, Madam President, for recognizing me for some comments on the budget reconciliation.

TRIBUTE TO BOB DOLE

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I will take just a couple of minutes beyond that which was allocated to me by the Senator from Nebraska to say that I, too, listened very intently to Senator DOLE's remarks today. I was touched and moved by them.

I will not go into his record, and I will not go to any length, but I want to say that BOB DOLE is someone whom I have admired over the years, with whom I have worked very smoothly. When he said it, he meant it. When he meant it, he said it. That is the way he operated.

He is part of a generation, of which I also am, and that is the generation of World War II veterans, a dwindling group, I regret to say. This year we will see several leave because, in addition to Senator BOB DOLE, Senator HATFIELD, and Senator HEFLIN will leave, and the group tightens and shrinks. It is not a very pleasant prospect to contemplate. But, nevertheless, it is a decided loss to take away the experience, the knowledge, the reflection of those who served in World War II at a time when America was a much different place, at a time when the values were established by tightly knit families, by those who worried about the loss of a loved one or the injury of a family member in the war. It was a huge war with somewhere around 14, 15 million people from our country in uniform. It touched every family in America. There was not a family that did not have close contact with that war.

We were also the generation that benefited enormously—enormously—from an educational program called the GI bill that was afforded to people like me and many others who serve here, where it changed our lives. The military experience was one thing. I served in World War II, not under the same level of danger that Senator DOLE or Senator INOUE served, but people in my unit were killed. It changed our lives because of the experience of the war, the fear, the danger, the detachment from family. When I enlisted in World War II, my father was already on his death bed, a man of just 43 years of age. And a family of four became a family of two virtually overnight.

But the experience of serving my country, the opportunity to do so, the opportunity to get an education, is something that ought to be firmly implanted in everybody's mind in this place and in this country, where an education can change one's life, as it did, I know for so many of my colleagues. Certainly, it did for me.

Without giving a personal biography, that is not my intent, just to say that

we will miss BOB DOLE. We will miss his experience and we will miss his wisdom. I wish him well—not quite as well as the Senator from New Hampshire, but that is in terms of the upcoming Presidential election—I wish him, personally, well and I wish him and his family many good years of enjoyment and good health.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1997—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, if I may now take the time allotted to me by the Senator from Nebraska, I want to talk about the conference report on the budget resolution, this budget that makes such deep cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment. My view is we ought to reject it and start over.

Before I make specific comments about the budget, I want to frame it in terms of the historical perspective. The Federal budget over the last 15 years, what has happened with it? The fiscal records of Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Reagan could not be more different. Over a 12-year-period, the Reagan and Bush administrations incurred \$2.3 trillion of debt. In fact, if we did not have to pay the interest on the debt racked up in these 12 years, the budget would be in balance this year. Not once did President Reagan or President Bush propose a balanced budget.

Fortunately, President Clinton's 4-year record is much different. President Clinton promised change in 1992 and he has produced it. Consider the following: The deficit has gone down for 4 straight years. The revised deficit figure for the fiscal 1996 year is now \$130 billion—by no means a modest figure, but substantially down from where it was 4 years ago. It is 1.8 percent of our gross domestic product. That is the lowest percentage of any industrialized country. For example, Japan's deficit is more than 3 percent of its GDP; Britain, the U.K., is 7 percent of its GDP; Italy's percentage of debt is 9 percent of GDP.

Finally, President Clinton is the first President to put forward a balanced budget proposal in a full generation. Madam President, budgets are more than just numbers. A budget is a statement of values. We are not accountants sent to Washington to only crunch numbers. We are here to respond to our people's needs for health security, for seniors on Medicare, and Medicaid for those who have only that program to provide for their health needs.

We are here to encourage educational opportunities for our young people. We are here to be stewards of the environment so that the next generation can enjoy clean water, clean air, my grandchildren will know about fish in the water, and not be afraid to go to a tap to take a drink of water, or will not have to be told to stay out of the air when playing games or exercising.

We are here to provide help and vision for our people in the next century. Simply, we are here to protect our citizens' life quality, to protect our economy, to protect our Nation, to protect our society. This budget does not accomplish those objectives. It will hurt those aspirations.

Madam President, unfortunately, some in the other party believe Government is evil. I say this because a very distinguished Republican, a Republican House Member told a very distinguished Congressman, Congressman HENRY HYDE, as I read from the report, "I trust Hamas," this person said, "more than I trust my own Government." Hamas—a terrorist organization with programs designed to kill innocent people, men, women, and children. What an odious comparison. Madam President, what government is this person talking about? Could it be the American Government? Our democratically elected Government?

Excluding net interest, two-thirds of the Federal Government is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits, and national defense. These are the major programs of our Federal Government. I repeat, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans, national defense. Are these evil programs? Are they equivalent to Hamas terrorist attacks? I do not get the connection, but I resent, terribly, the words that are used. Whatever one thinks about mistakes or poor performance of our Government, this Government and this country can never be compared to a terrorist organization.

Madam President, the question is no longer whether we will balance the budget. The question is, how? Who will win in programs that are in place? Who will lose if programs are canceled? Finally, whose side is Government on?

President Clinton has laid out the right way to balance the budget. His budget reaches balance within 6 years, as documented by CBO, but unlike the Republican version the President's budget, protects Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment, and it does not increase taxes on working families. The President's budget not only protects 37 million senior citizens from deep Medicare cuts contained in this budget, but it will also, despite reports to the contrary in recent days, it will also make the Medicare trust fund solvent until the year 2005. It preserves the guarantee of Medicaid for 36 million seniors and disabled persons who rely on those programs. It protects our Nation's environment by ensuring full funding for the implementation of the major environmental programs like clean air, clean water, and toxic waste cleanups. It makes critical investments in education and training, it provides increased funding for programs like Head Start, title I, and safe and drug-free schools.

Finally, the President's budget maintains the earned-income tax credit, which provides tax relief for working families who earn less than \$28,000 a